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Cancer Survival in North Carolina

by

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Abstract

Objectives: Cancer survival rates have not been tracked by the North Carolina Central Cancer Registry (CCR), largely due to the insufficient resources necessary to actively follow up with patients after diagnosis. This study is intended to compare survival rates for North Carolina patients followed via passive methods (i.e., linkages) to survival rates reported by the SEER program, which actively follows patients after diagnosis.

Methods: Incidence data from 1999 through 2005 were used for the analysis, and followed through 2006. Follow up for these cases is conducted annually via linkages to administrative databases. Five-year relative survival rates were computed for North Carolina patients by site, sex, race, and age, and compared to five-year relative survival rates reported for the 17 SEER geographic regions.

Results: Survival patterns in North Carolina were comparable to survival patterns reported for the 17 SEER geographic regions, with rates in SEER regions being slightly higher than rates in North Carolina. For both North Carolina and SEER regions, the five cancers with the poorest survival rates were pancreas, liver, gallbladder, lung/bronchus, and esophagus, while the five cancers with the best survival rates were prostate, testis, endocrine, melanoma, and female breast.

Discussion: The findings of this study indicate that survival rates for patients followed via passive methods closely approximate survival rates for patients followed via active methods, and thus pave the way for continual tracking of survival patterns in North Carolina. These rates will allow cancer control programs to evaluate the progress of early detection efforts and treatment on survival of cancer patients.